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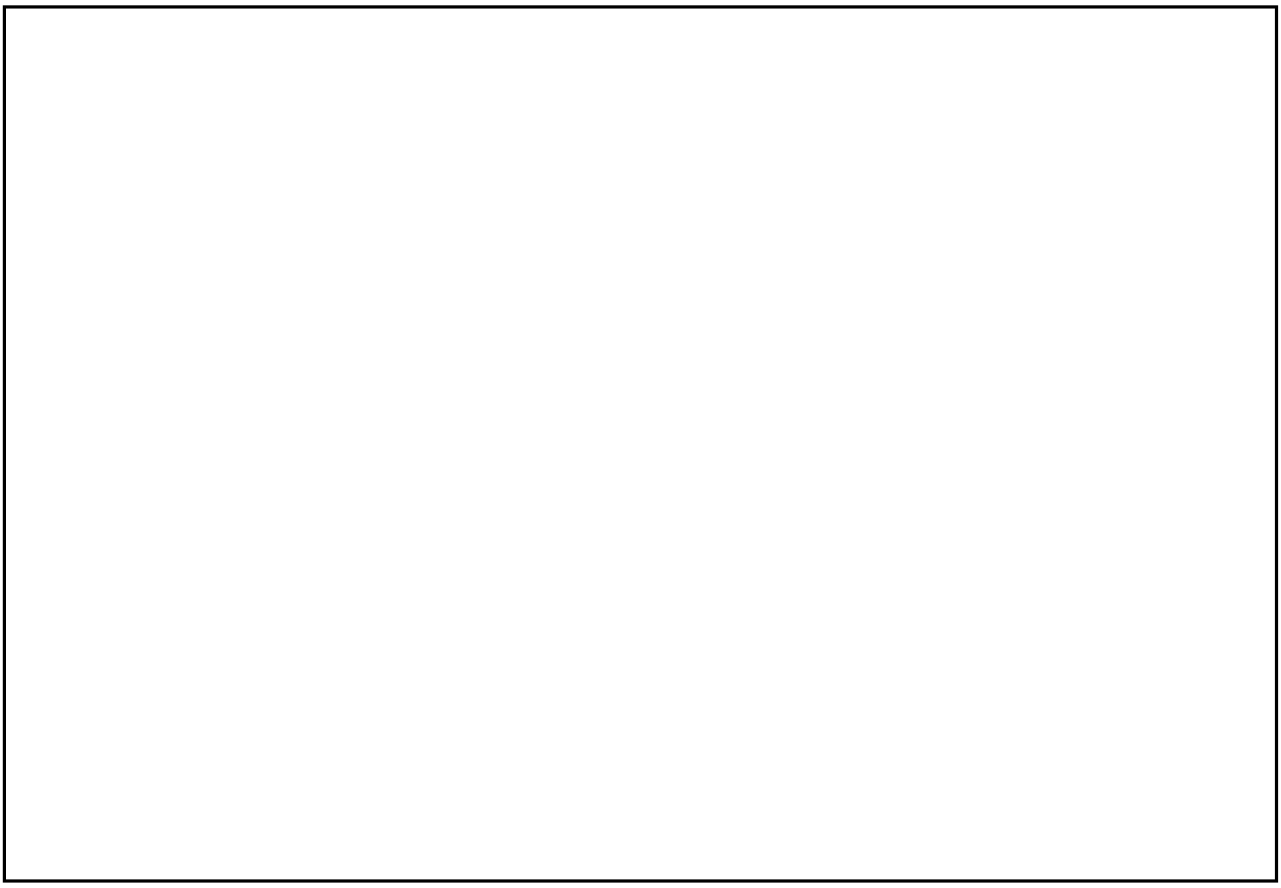
#161 EASTERN EUROPEAN INTELLIGENCER OCI #0958/72
24 Aug. 1972



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East Europe Prepares for Western Tourists

East European attitudes in seeking out and capturing the Western tourist trade differ substantially, according to embassy responses to a recent State Department questionaire. Of the five countries surveyed, (no response has been received from Romania and Yugoslavia was not queried) Bulgaria stands out as the country trying hardest to promote a successful tourist trade, with Hungary following closely behind. Both countries are trying to capitalize on summer resort spots--the Black Sea for Bulgaria and Lake Balaton for Hungary. Roads into these areas are being improved, new hotels are being built and more are planned. Poland and East Germany, a little late in jumping onto the bandwagon, also are trying to improve their facilities. Lacking 25X1

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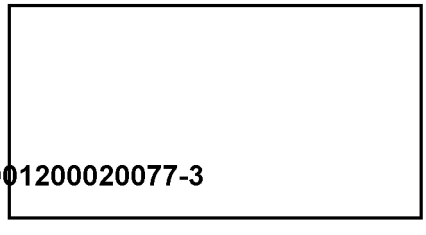

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seaside resorts, Warsaw and Pankow stress their cultural heritage; their tourist offices, for example, offer package tours with special interest in the arts or theater. Czechoslovakia, which already has a sizeable tourist trade, has made no significant effort to promote tourism since 1968, and tourism receives low priority.

Rules and regulations regarding the western tourist vary by country. Only Bulgaria has abolished all visa requirements for western tourists, although Poland currently is in the process of altering its visa requirements with individual western countries. Generally, travelers from the West are treated equally, and in no East European country are Americans singled out for discrimination.

The countries contrast predominately on their policy regarding currency exchange rates. Two countries (Bulgaria and Hungary) offer tourists the same rate of exchange as the free or official rate; two (East Germany and Czechoslovakia) discriminate against tourists by keeping the tourist exchange rate artificially higher than the free market rate; Poland, however, gives tourists, a preferential rate approximately one third better than the free rate. Bulgaria is the only country which requires no minimum daily expenditure from its tourists. East Germany has qualified restrictions, and the three remaining countries require minimum daily expenditures of from $5 to $9 per day. Money left at the end of a visit can be reconverted to other currency in all countries but Hungary which will convert only 50% in excess of the required minimum daily charge.

Western tourism in East Europe is expected to increase as the political barriers between East and West come down. Most regimes welcome this trade as an excellent source of foreign exchange. The administrative procedures of handling these travelers, now rather cumbersome, presumably will be simplified and improved as the numbers of tourists increase. 25X1

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NOTE: THE VIEWS EXPRESSED ABOVE REPRESENT ONLY THE ANALYSIS OF THE EE BRANCH

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